

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Color Arts, Inc.

#### Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership

#### Color Arts Wipes Out Inefficiency To Improve Competitive Edge

##### Client Profile:

Color Arts, Inc. is a leading decorative decal manufacturer and has more than 50 years of experience producing retail, original equipment manufacturer, and fleet graphics. The company also provides graphics management services, from design through installation. Color Arts employs 230 people and is located in Racine, Wisconsin.

##### Situation:

Color Arts wanted to improve its processes, but was unsure of how to get started. The company called the Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership (WMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance.

##### Solution:

WMEP helped Color Arts utilize a lean manufacturing tool called value stream mapping that is used to identify waste in manufacturing operations. Value stream mapping examines the flow of product and information through the plant—from order entry to delivery. It is a low-cost, high impact strategy for reducing costs and improving productivity.

For Color Arts, creating the map of product flow within the plant was an eye opener. Visual representation of the company's processes “looked like a spaghetti bowl in an Italian restaurant.” The distance product traveled from start to completion measured 1,500 feet! To tackle the corrective action plan developed during WMEP's value stream mapping exercise, Color Arts created a team of employees from different functional areas of the plant. The team determined that by streamlining processes and moving equipment, it could reduce the distance products travel by two-thirds, or nearly 990 feet.

In addition to reducing product travel distance, Color Arts' changes have increased plant capacity by 25 percent and saved the company almost \$65,000. The company plans to find additional savings by applying value stream mapping to paper flow within the company. Experts say that waste and duplication in non-manufacturing operations can consume 50 to 90 percent of the cycle time from order entry to product shipment.

##### Results:

Reduced distance product travels by 990 feet.  
Increased plant capacity by 25 percent.

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Saved as much as \$65,000.

Planning to reduce paper flow within the company for additional savings.

**Testimonial:**

“We’re stronger and more profitable as a result of our work with WMEP. We’re also very excited about the fact that we’ve greatly expanded our capacity to handle new business.”

Ralph Rhein, Vice President of Manufacturing